

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 SAM-01 AID-05 DHA-02 ORM-01 /087 W

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R 291013Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8572

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC HONOLULU

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 15352

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, CG

SUBJECT: RESISTANCE TO THE NEW CAMBODIAN REGIME

REF: A. FBIS OW 221028Y JUL 75

B. USDAO BANGKOK IR 6895 0379 75 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY DISSIDENT ACTIVITY OCCUR-
RING INSIDE CAMBODIA. DIVERSE GROUPS WHICH ARE RELATIVELY
SMALL IN SCALE, UNCOORDINATED, AND NOT REALLY A MENACE
TO THE KHMER COMMUNISTS AT THIS TIME ARE CONDUCTING IT.
END SUMMARY.

1. CAMBODIANS CONTINUE TO ARRIVE IN THAILAND DAILY TO
SEEK REFUGE. THEY ARE THE SOURCE OF NUMEROUS STORIES
ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE THE BAMBOO CURTAIN
(AS THE THAI PRESS SOMETIMES DUBS THE BORDER). MANY OF
THESE STORIES ARE BASED ON HEARSAY. FOR SOME TIME EX-
FILTREES HAVE REPORTED INSTANCES OF RESISTANCE TO THE NEW
KC GOVERNMENT. THEY HAVE FREQUENTLY DESCRIBED THIS AC-
TIVITY AS KHMER SEREI AND CITED THE NAME OF GENERAL

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NORODOM CHANTARANGSEY AS ONE OF THE RESISTANCE LEADERS.

THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THESE REPRESENT CATCHWORDS MORE THAN ACTUAL FACT, BUT THIS CONCLUSION DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE PREMISE THAT THERE IS SOME DISSIDENCE OCCURRING.

2. REPORTS OF ACTIVITY CENTER ON TWO AREAS IN PARTICULAR, THE CAMBODIAN SOUTHWEST AND THE NORTHWEST. WITH RESPECT TO THE FIRST AREA, STORIES GENERALLY AGREE THAT A GROUP IS TAKING SHAPE--POSSIBLY NUMBERING 2000 MEN, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE SEEN ESTIMATES AS HIGH AS AN IMPROBABLE 20,000-- AT A BASE LOCATED IN THE RUGGED CARDAMOM MOUNTAINS. RECENT REFUGEES HAVE DESCRIBED THIS GROUP FIGHTING THREE BATTLES IN EARLY JULY, ATTACKING CONVOYS ALONG ROUTE 4 FROM KOMPONG SOM TO KOMPONG SPEU, AND REPORTEDLY INFLECTING CASUALTIES ON THE KC.

3. ONE FREQUENTLY HEARS GENERAL NORODOM CHANTARANGSEY'S NAME ASSOCIATED WITH THE RESISTANCE IN THE SOUTHWEST. FORMERLY A MEMBER OF THE KHMER ISSARAK--NOT KHMER SEREI-- CHANTARANGSEY WAS A WELL-RESPECTED MILITARY LEADER DURING THE WAR IN CAMBODIA. HE OFTEN SAID THAT IF THE GKR FELL, HE WOULD TAKE TO THE FOREST AS HE HAD IN HIS ISSARAK DAYS. ALTHOUGH WE HEAR HIS NAME OFTEN FROM REFUGEES, THERE IS NO ONE WHO APPEARS TO HAVE ACTUALLY SEEN HIM. INDEED, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT CHANTARANGSEY DID NOT ESCAPE THE KC NOOSE IN THE FINAL DAYS. THEREFORE, WE TREAT REPORTS OF CHANTARANGSEY'S LEADERSHIP WITH CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM.

4. OTHER ACTIVITY IS REPORTED IN THE NORTHWEST. ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE SOURCE, BUN SANG, A FORMER KHMER SEREI LEADER WHO RALLIED TO THE SIHANOUK GOVERNMENT IN 1969 ALONG WITH 640 OF HIS FOLLOWERS, FOR WHICH THE PRINCE MADE HIM A CAPTAIN IN THE ROYAL KHMER ARMED FORCES, FORMED A GROUP CALLED THE COBRA IN KOMPONG CHHNANG PRIOR TO THE FALL OF THE GKR. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER BUN SANG OR A FORMER MONK WHOSE NAME WE DO NOT KNOW NOW HEADS THE ORGANIZATION; WE HAVE HEARD ONE REPORT THAT BUN SANG IS A REFUGEE IN THAILAND'S BURIRAM PROVINCE. COBRA MAY CONSIST OF 200 MEN IN THE BATTAMBANG REGION. IT IS SAID TO HVAE CAPTURED A KC ARMS AND AMMUNITION CACHE, AND IS RECRUIT-
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ING TROOPS IN VILLAGES INSIDE CAMBODIA. IT REPORTEDLY SHELLED BATTAMBANG IN EARLY JULY.

5. ELSEWHERE IN THE SAME CORNER OF CAMBODIA, BUN SANG'S BROTHER, BUN SOUNG, A FORMER KHMER SEREI, IS SAID TO HAVE 100 MEN IN A FOREST CAMP 40 KILOMETERS NORTH OF BATTAMBANG. IT APPEARS THAT THIS GROUP OF DISSIDENTS CALLS ITSELF KHMER SEREI. FINALLY, A GROUP OF 70 KHMER AND LAO OF

CAMBODIAN ORIGIN APPEARS TO BE OPERATING OUT OF THAILAND, SOUTH OF ARANYAPRATHET. IT CLAIMS TO HAVE ATTACKED AND KILLED FOUR KC SOLDIERS AT O PAPOUL, EAST OF POIPET, ON JULY 7. IT THEN LED OUT 1600 PEOPLE AND 200 BUFFALOES; THEY ARE NOW IN THAILAND. WE DO NOT KNOW WHO LEADS THE 70 OR IF THEY REPRESENT A GROUO OF DISSIDENTS OR MERELY MERCENARIES.

6. AFP HAS REPORTED RESISTANCE ACTIVITY OCCURRING AROUND PHNOM PENH, LED BY TA MOK, WHO IT SAID FOUNDED THE GROUP WHICH BECAME KNOWN AS KHMER ROUGE (REF A). WE HAVE HEARD NO OTHER REPORTS OF ACTIVITY IN THE AREA. FURTHERMORE, TA MOK HAS BEEN FOR SOME TIME THE COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER FOR CAMBODIA'S SOUTHWESTERN REGION.

7. ELEMENTS LOYAL TO FORMER CAMBODIAN LEAEER IN TAHWN NOW IN EXILE HERE, ARE REPORTEDLY MAKING FORAYS INTO CAMBODIA. IN TAM, ALWAYS ACTIVE, HAS PAID THREE VISITS TO THIS EM-BASSY TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR HIS PLAN TO OPEN A FRONT IN NORTHWESTERN CAMBODIA (REF B). WE OFFERED HIM NO PROSPECT OF ANY U.S. ASSISTANCE.

8. BESIDES THE ABOVE ACTIVITY, ONE HEARS TALK OF CAMBODIANS TRYING TO FORM ADDITIONAL RESISTANCE GROUPS. ONE STORY CENTERS AROUND THE FORMER CORRUPT GOVERNOR OF BATTAMBANG,

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8573

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC HONOLULU

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 15352

LT. GEN. SEK SEM IETH, A REFUGEE HERE, WHO HAS TRIED SO FAR UNSUCCESSFULLY TO PERSUADE THE SOLDIERS PREVIOUSLY UNDER HIS COMMAND TO FOLLOW HIM IN A SWEEP INTO CAMBODIA. HE HAS REPORTEDLY ALSO MET WITH IN TAM, ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT KNOW THE RESULTS OF THEIR CONVERSATION.

9. A QUESTION OFTEN ASKED AMONG OBSERVERS IN BANGKOK IS TO WHAT EXTENT ELEMENTS OF THE THAI MILITARY MAY BE ASSISTING OR PROMOTING THE CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE GROUPS. WE KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT IN TAM HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THAI MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS IN CONNECTION WITH HIS OWN AMBITIONS. WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS FROM THE KOH KONG AREA THAT THREE TO FOUR THOUSAND MEMBERS OF AN "IMPURE" KC GROUP WHICH THE PARTY EXPELLED ARE NOW LIVING RIGHT ON THE BORDER AREA AND HAVE BEEN STIRRING UP TROUBLE INSIDE THAT REMOTE PART OF CAMBODIA, QUITE POSSIBLY AN EFFORT WHICH THE THAI ARE ORCHESTRATING TO MANIPULATE EVENTS IN THE AREA. IN THE 1960'S, IN THE HEYDAY OF THE KHMER SEREI, THAI INTELLIGENCE HAD IMPORTANT LINKS TO AND AGENTS AMONG THE KHMER SEREI. SOME OF THE LATTER UNDOUBTEDLY REMAIN AND CONTINUE TO OPERATE, AT LEAST IN PART BECAUSE THE RTG HAS NOT FOCUSED ON THEM. THOSE AGENTS AND THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN GENERAL ARE
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USEFUL TO THE THAI INTELLIGENCE ESTABLISHMENT, WHICH CONTINUES TO SUPPORT ARMED INTELLIGENCE FORAYS INTO CAMBODIA. WHATEVER THAI INVOLVEMENT EXISTS, THERE LURKS A SUSPICION AMONG OBSERVERS THAT ITS TERMINATION WOULD BE A REAL SETBACK TO DISSIDENT ACTIVITY IN CAMBODIA.

10. THUS FAR IT APPEARS TO US THAT BOTH REFUGEES AND OBSERVERS ARE USING THE TERM KHMER SEREI LOOSELY TO COVER A NUMBER OF GROUPS. IT IS A NAME THAT CAMBODIANS RECOGNIZE EASILY AND THAT FOREIGNERS CAN IDENTIFY. BUT ONE SHOULD EXERCISE CAUTION IN USING IT. CAMBODIANS GENERALLY AGREE THAA THE LEADER OF THE OLD KHMER SEREI, SON NGOC THA H, SUCCEEDED IN MAKING HIS WAY FROM SOUTH VIET-NAM AFTER ITS FALL TO PARIS. HIS DEPUTY, LEK SOMOEUN, IS A REFUGEE IN SURIN, AWAITING PERMISSION TO SETTLE IN THE U.S. IT IS DIFFICULT TO BE
IX.

11. THIS, THEN, IS THE SUM OF REPORTS WE HAVE HEARD MOST RECENTLY CONCERNING RESISTANCE ACTIVITY IN CAMBODIA. IT SEEMS SAFE TO SAY THAT THE ACTIVITY IS IN NO WAY COORDINATED UNLESS IT IS BY THE THAI NOR, DO WE SUSPECT, IS IT

MUCH MORE THAN A NUISANCE TO THE KC AT THIS TIME. THERE
ARDMEHHMYYZQFSXNDGQZXBN IERS ARE SPREAD
THINLY AROUND THE COUNTRY. WHEN, FOR INSTANCE, THERE MAY
BE ONLY FOUR SOLDIERS TO GUARD A UNIT OF THIRTY FAMILIES
WORKING IN A SECTION OF RICE FIELDS, IT WOULD BE RELATIVELY
EASY TO PICK OFF THE SOLDIERS, THUS THE RELIANCE ON
TERROR TO KEEP THE PEOPLE IN LINE. WERE DISSIDENT GROUPS TO
PICK OFF THESE GUARDS OR ATTACK CONVOYS METHODICALLY,
THEY COULD CAUSE CONSIDERABLE PROBLEMS FOR THE NEW COM-
MUNIST SZIN#
RELATIVELY SMALL AND ISOLATED FROM ONE ANOTHER, IT IS
DIFFICULT TO TAKE THEM TOO SERIOUSLY.

12. THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW REPORTS OF
RESISTANCE ACTIVITY VERY CLOSELY.
WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.
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